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SUMMARY

Land is an essential resource which is needed by humans for the production of food and to meet other immediate needs. As a result, human influence has affected large scale land-use land-cover change (LULCC), globally. The increase in population, in combination with dietary changes, continue to increase the demand for agricultural land and thus further aggravated the pace and magnitude of LULCC. In many locations, the increased pressures on land lead to unsustainable land management.

According to a report by the United Nations, published in 2009, the population in Ethiopia increases by approximately 2.2 million people per year, and is expected to more than double by the year 2050. This expected population growth causes an increased pressure on land resources as a result of increased demand for agricultural products. For the past few decades Ethiopia has experienced widespread conversion of natural vegetation into farmland, which is often associated with land degradation. Agricultural land has mainly expanded at the expense of forests, woodlands, grasslands and water. Such changes, in combination with unsustainable land management practices, are a serious threat for biodiversity as well as for the productivity of the country.

The way in which land is governed can have a large impact on LULCC, and potentially mitigate land degradation and related negative consequences. Studies conducted in many developing countries indicate that land governance is among the major factors that contribute to the (in) effectiveness of land policies. Yet, literature is lacking on the perception of different stakeholders on LULCC, their drivers, impacts, as well as their roles in the development and implementation of land use policies and the effects of land governance process on the land use dynamics. This thesis investigates the perception of different stakeholders regarding the land use dynamics, associated drivers, impacts as well as their roles in the development and implementation of land use policies in Ethiopia with a particular emphasis on the Oromia regional state and the Central Rift Valley (CRV). This thesis uses empirical evidence to address the following two research questions:

- a. *How do multiple stakeholders perceive LULCC, its drivers, associated impacts, in the context of coping strategies and their participation in the land governance process?*

- b. *What is the role of different stakeholders in the current land governance process, and how do these stakeholders perceive their participation in the land governance process?*

The first research question is addressed in chapter 2, while the second research question is addressed by chapters 3, 4 and 5.

Chapter 2 compares the perceptions of multiple stakeholders (farmers, NGOs, government institutions and the business community) of LULCC with observed LULCC which as determined from remote sensing imagery. Empirical evidence indicates that agricultural land in Adami Tulu Jido Kombolcha wereda and Arsi Negele wereda increased by nearly 300% between 1973 and 2014. The analysis also indicates that stakeholders have a good perception of recent LULCC, its drivers and its impacts. At the same time, they have a limited adaptation capacity to cope with the impacts of LULCC.

Chapter 3 assesses the way in which different institutions interact across multiple levels and the way in which land use policies impact land use decisions. Government institutions at the federal, regional, zonal, wereda and kebele level were interviewed to assess their perception about the way land use policies are developed and implemented. It also assesses how effects of land governance are perceived by these institutions and compares the perception of institutions at different administration levels. The findings indicate that higher and lower level institutions have a different perception regarding the role of stakeholders in land governance. Institutions at higher levels indicated that land governance is a largely participatory and inclusive process, while institutions at lower levels perceived the opposite. Institutional participants indicated that their low level of participation, the flow of information and the communication gap all affected their policy awareness. Results also indicate that policies are designed in a top-down fashion with little or no participation of lower level institutions and farmers. This led to a lack of ownership of land use policies. Furthermore all the participants, irrespective of their administration level, indicate that existing land use policies are implemented ineffectively.

Chapter 4 assesses the perception of the farmers and regional government institutions about farmer participation in the land governance process as well as the policy awareness of farmers. In this

context, the perception of governmental institutions were compared with the perception of farmers regarding the level of involvement in the land governance process by the farmers. Results indicate that farmers perceive the land governance process to be non-participatory and exclusive, while institutions have a mixed perception. On the one hand, higher level government institutions indicated that farmers actively participated and that they were included in the decision making process. On the other hand, local institutions at the level of the wereda and kebele, indicated that the policy process is un-participatory and exclusive for the local community as well as for their institutional offices. Moreover, participants indicated that farmers are better represented in the implementation stage, as compared to the agenda setting, policy formulation and policy evaluation stages. Furthermore, the findings indicate that most farmers have a low level of policy awareness.

Chapter 5 assesses the participation of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) active in the management of natural resources in the development and implementation of land use policies as well as their roles in this process. This chapter further explores the different factors affecting NGO participation in the land governance structure. Despite their active role in natural resource management, NGOs have a low level of participation in the development of related policies due to a number of factors. The reason of this lack of participation is generally the 2009 Charity and Society proclamation, which explicitly restricted NGOs in their activities, depending on the type of NGO. Furthermore, NGOs report a lack of networking among NGOs, a lack of cooperation with the government, a lack of information, a lack of trust by the local community, and a lack of capacity as factors affecting their contribution to natural resource management.

Chapter 6 synthesizes the findings of the preceding chapters and places them into the wider scientific context. Stakeholders have a good perception of LULCC, its drivers and impacts; they have little adaptation mechanism due to lack of information and capacity. Participation of different actors in the development and implementation differs according to the different stakeholders, yet generally, the process is perceived as top-down and with little influence for institutions other than high level governmental institutions. This could lead to a low level of policy awareness and lack of commitment to enforce the policy at the lower decision making level. Furthermore, local knowledge and concerns of non-state actors also might have not been incorporated in the policy document.

In general, natural resource management requires a sound governance process, in which relevant stakeholders take part in all phases including the decision making process. I argue that policies which are developed with external experts with little or no participation of relevant stakeholders will ultimately become ineffective irrespective of their technical soundness. I further argue that participation will increase a sense of ownership among stakeholders and thereby improves their commitment for its implementation. Hence, to sustainably administer and manage natural resources it is important to develop policies in a participatory and consultative manner.